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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2008

In Today's Papers

Turkey Continues Anti-PKK Offensive in Northern Iraq
All papers over the weekend and today report that up to 10,000 Turkish troops crossed the border into northern Iraq on Thursday night. The land forces were supported by warplanes, artillery and combat helicopters. The Turkish General Staff (TGS) reported a Turkish helicopter crashed during the operations but that Turkish troops killed at least 112 PKK terrorists. Meanwhile, fifteen Turkish soldiers were killed in clashes with the PKK. Monday's papers cite the TGS as saying that the terrorists are panicking. Nationalist-oriented Cumhuriyet reports "PKK fighters are accusing each other of being spies and they are killing each other." Papers report Turkish troops destroyed PKK camps in Zap and Cemco Valley. Backed by F-16 fighter jets, Turkish troops are advancing toward the Qandil Mountains, according to papers. Mainstream Hurriyet reported on Saturday that Turkish troops destroyed bridges and roads that could be used to extend logistical support to the PKK. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports Monday that following the Turkish cross-border operations into northern Iraq, Iran has started to mass troops on its border with Iraq. Mainstream Vatan reported Sunday that some Turkish troops will return home after the first phase of the operations is completed. Some troops will remain in northern Iraq and set up cross-border patrol stations to prevent terrorist infiltration into Turkey. Papers quote unnamed Iraqi sources who say Prime Minister Erdogan will send a delegation to Baghdad this week to discuss the Turkish military's incursion into northern Iraq.

Reactions to Turkish Offensive into Northern Iraq

All papers report Iraq's government issued a statement on Sunday, which read, "The Iraqi government considers this unilateral Turkish military action a threat to the stability of the region and a violation of Iraq's sovereignty, and calls on Turkey to withdraw its troops from Iraq as soon as possible." Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari said, despite Turkey's pledges to Baghdad that Turkish troops would "avoid targeting the civilian infrastructure,"

five bridges had already been destroyed. Zebari warned that an escalation in Turkey's operations in northern Iraq could destabilize the region.

Weekend papers report Prime Minister Erdogan phoned President Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki in order to ensure both leaders Turkish troops will withdraw as soon as they destroy their targets. President Abdullah Gul phoned Iraqi President Jalal Talabani to tell him Turkey wanted to improve economic and political relations. Islamist-oriented Zaman reports on Sunday that Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari said Talabani accepted Turkey's invitation, but will not go immediately. Foreign Minister Ali Babacan instructed Turkish ambassadors around the world to explain to their host countries the aim and scope of military operations into northern Iraq.

Papers report over the weekend that Secretary Rice highlighted the United States' "solidarity with Turkey" in the fight against the PKK, but that "Iraq's stability and progress is in Turkey's interest. So everyone should keep in mind that nothing should be done to destabilize the situation in Iraq." Defense Secretary Robert Gates warned that Turkey's military strike against the PKK in northern Iraq will not solve the Kurdish problem. He recommended political and economic measures in order to address the Kurdish problem.

Papers report over the weekend that EU Expansion Commissioner Olli Rehn said the EU "understands" Turkey, but warned that Turkey should refrain from "disproportionate" military action, and "human rights and the rule of law" should be respected. A German Foreign Ministry spokesman said Berlin is following the operations with "major concern," adding that Turkish military presence in northern Iraq was "a serious risk to stability." The British Foreign Secretariat

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urged Turkey to protect civilians from harm and warned Turkey to resolve the problem via diplomatic means. Russia also issued a call for restraint after the start of the Turkish land operations. Papers also report the Arab League urged Turkey to end the offensive. A commentary in Islamist-oriented Zaman says "in order to win the backing of Europe, Turkey should push for democratization at home and launch Kurdish language broadcasts without delay."

Editorial Commentary on Turkish Offensive on Northern Iraq

"The Land Operation and Journalism"

Oral Calislar is a political scientist, author, and regular columnist for Cumhuriyet. He writes with a liberal approach to the Kurdish issue, human rights and democratization. He is opposed to the Iraq war but often takes an objective view on Turkish-American relations.

He wrote in leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet (2/25): "It is disturbing to watch the war-mongering style of recent Turkish television reporting. Over the past 25 years, history has taught us that the fight against terrorism cannot be limited to military action. The terrorism problem has social and political dimensions that reach across borders. For a television journalist, it is very easy to be motivated by ratings. However, this military operation will have to come to an end sooner or later. The cultural, social and political dimensions will continue to exist after this operation concludes, and we will not be able to bring back those who were lost in these battles. The truth is the US did not offer support for the land operation as a step toward a Kurdish solution. Washington, in the light of the Turkish public's growing fury against the PKK, was forced to give its okay for a limited-scale land operation. Once the operation is over, Turkey will have to deal with reforms. However, so far we simply do not see the government with a plan for social development. War-mongering journalism is an easy thing to produce and it helps television stations' ratings. But what we really need is common sense in order to produce a long-lasting solution to the Kurdish problem."

"The Land Operation and the US"

Omer Taspinar is the Foreign Policy Director of the Turkey Project at the Brookings Institute. He is an expert on Turkey, the European Union, Muslims in Europe, political Islam, the Middle East and

Kurdish nationalism. He is a professor at the National War College and an adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies. He wrote in leftist Taraf (2/25): "It appears as if Washington and Ankara have enhanced their strategic and military cooperation. This is proven by the recent high-level dialogue between the Pentagon and the Turkish General Staff. Washington is creating a new anti-Iran bloc that includes Sunni Arab countries, Turkey and Israel. As Secretary Gates said, "Washington should not lose Turkey." He was

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well aware of the fact that this approach requires solid cooperation with Turkey against the PKK. The US gave a green light for Turkey's land operation in exchange for Turkey's support for Washington's policy to isolate Iran. Within Turkey, the land operation will weaken the PKK's military capacity. But as we know, the organization has deep social roots in Turkey. Grassroots support for the PKK is fed by Turkey's social, economic and political problems. The ruling AKP may be thinking of paving the way for reforms after the land operation. Let us hope that expectation is correct so we may see political steps following in the footsteps of military action."

Turban Directive to Rectors from YOK Chairman
Sabah, Milliyet, Hurriyet, Aksam, Vatan, Zaman, Cumhuriyet, Radikal:
Following the Presidential approval of the constitutional amendments freeing the use of turban in universities, Higher Education Board (YOK) Chairman Prof. Yusuf Ziya Ozcan sent a written directive to university rectors saying 'there is no need for any other legislative arrangement to enforce the Article 10 and 42 of the constitution'. Prof. Ozcan urged the rectors "not to prevent

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the students wearing turban from entering universities." However, rectors said that amendment of articles 10 and 42 of the constitution would not enable students wearing turban to enter universities. They noted that legal process should continue and supplemental article 17 of the YOK law should be amended as well.

Greek Cyprus Votes for a New President
Hurriyet, Sabah, Milliyet, Radikal and others: Greek Cypriots voted in the second round of presidential elections yesterday. Communist-rooted candidate Demetris Christofias and conservative Kasolides both staked their campaigns on pledges to stave off permanent partition by offering an olive branch to Turkish Cypriots. Christofias won the elections with 53.36 % of the votes. During his first speech after being elected as President, Christofias said "Tomorrow is the start of a new day. Long live united Cyprus." Hurriyet reports that Christofias extended his hand in friendship to the Turkish Cypriots and added that he will meet with Turkish Cypriot leader Talat very soon.

TV News:
CNN Turk

Domestic News

- Istanbul University Rector Professor Mesut Parlak said students wearing the headscarf would not be admitted into the university compound.
- The trial of the murderers of Armenian Turkish journalist Hrant Dink will continue in Istanbul on Monday.

International News

- Russia's ambassador to NATO, Dmitri Rogozin, said Russia will never use force to resolve the problem of Kosovo, which unilaterally declared its independence from Serbia.
- Pakistan has blocked access to the YouTube website because of content deemed offensive to Islam.
- Cuba's National Assembly chose Raul Castro as Cuba's new president on Sunday.

- The Iraqi government has urged Ankara to pull back its troops from Iraq as soon as possible.
- Following Turkish cross-border operations in northern Iraq, Iran has started to mass troops at the Iraqi border.
- An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 6.6 rattled Indonesia's Sumatra Island on Sunday.

WILSON